



General Management Plan News


Newsletter Two - April 2006

Preliminary Alternatives Presented

News from the Superintendent

Thank you for your comments and suggestions regarding the future management of Virgin Islands National Park and Coral Reef National Monument. Your comments and ideas were, and continue to be, instrumental in devising future guidance that will be summarized in the General Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement for each of these parks. In this second General Management Plan newsletter, we present the results of our planning efforts to date, showing how we utilized your ideas and organized them into preliminary alternatives. We now need your advice, suggestions, and comments on these preliminary alternatives. The preliminary alternatives will be presented at the upcoming public meetings (see schedule). Please comment either at the upcoming meetings, on-line or by using the enclosed comment form by June 5, 2006.

We value your input regarding the future management of Virgin Islands National Park and Coral Reef National Monument. Preserving and conserving the resources through public communication and involvement are essential to the completion of successful plans. Please contact us if you have any questions. Thank you for your time and participation.

Art Frederick

Superintendent

Public Meeting Schedule

The next step in the planning process is to obtain comments on the preliminary alternatives summarized in this newsletter. You are invited to attend any of the upcoming public meetings listed below.

Dates and Times:

- May 2, 2006 - Elysian Hotel
Red Hook, St. Thomas
6:00 - 8:30 PM
- May 3, 2006 - John's Folly Learning Institute
Coral Bay, St. John
6:00 - 8:30 PM
- May 4, 2006 - Julius Sprauve School
Cruz Bay, St. John
6:00 - 8:30 PM

The National Park Service appreciates your input into this planning process and would like your feedback. We request that you provide your comments at the upcoming public meetings, or you may mail your comments by June 5, 2006:

Superintendent
Virgin Islands National Park
GMP/EIS
1300 Cruz Bay Creek
St. John, VI 00830

You may also enter comments directly through the Internet by directing your web browser to the following URL address: <http://parkplanning.nps.gov>. Under the "Choose a Park" drop-down window, find Virgin Islands National Park or Coral Reef National Monument and then click "Go".

The Plan's Purpose

The purpose of the General Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement is to present a plan for managing Virgin Islands National Park and Coral Reef National Monument for the next 15 to 20 years. The elements of this planning effort were described in our previous newsletter.

In June, July and August 2004, meetings were conducted to identify issues and to ask the public to voice their concerns and suggest ideas about the future of these two parks. We received over 800 comments. Based on input received, the planning team developed a set of preliminary management alternatives for each park.

Description of Management Zones

The planning team developed five management zones for Virgin Islands National Park and three management zones for Coral Reef National Monument. Preliminary alternatives for future park conditions and management were developed by arranging these zones in different configurations in each park. The management zones are described for each park.

Virgin Islands National Park

Visitor Contact and Operations Zone: In this zone, experiences would include collecting information, biking, boating, participating in special events, and interacting with park staff, attending interpretive walks and talks.

The types of facilities and development that one would expect to find would be parking lots, roads, trails, boat launch, waste disposal facilities, comfort stations, visitor and administrative facilities, and maintenance facilities.

The management emphasis would focus on access, education, and outreach.

Recreation Zone: In this zone, the types of experiences would include such activities as hiking, boating, swimming, camping, picnicking, beach use, snorkeling, SCUBA diving, and overnight stays.

The management emphasis would focus on partnering, education and outreach.

Developing Preliminary Alternatives

In the planning process we assess a range of alternative future conditions and management scenarios.

Based upon all the comments received, there were three key concerns identified:

- Levels of access, recreation and management needed to protect resources and provide quality experiences
- Numbers and types of facilities/infrastructure
- Level of partnering/outreach/education.

These concerns were carried through the development of preliminary alternatives to show you how each is addressed. Each of the preliminary alternatives were created by mapping management zones. These zones are described for each of the parks.

Nature and Heritage Discovery Zone: In this zone, one would learn about the park's diverse natural and cultural resources through such experiences as interpretive walks and talks, hiking, picnicking, and special events.

The types of facilities in this zone would include small visitor contact stations, comfort stations, built trails, kiosks, and existing roads.

Resource Protection Zone: In this zone, experiences include nature observation, boating, swimming, hiking, snorkeling, scuba diving, and backcountry camping. Please note that backcountry camping is considered the pack it in and pack out variety, not a campground facilitated experience as allowed in the Recreation Zone.

The types of facilities and development in this zone would include existing roads, parking areas, trails, moorings, designated campsites, restrooms, smaller maintenance and ranger support facilities.

The management emphasis would focus on resource protection.

Backcountry Experience Zone: The core area of the International Biosphere Reserve is part of this zone. The experience would be less facilitated in this zone, with activities such as hiking, backcountry camping, nature observation, and exploration of more remote uplands, near-shore and marine areas.

The types of facilities would include trails, existing, unpaved parking areas, designated backcountry camping sites, moorings, restrooms, signs and kiosks. There would be no new paved roads in this zone.

The management emphasis would focus on resource protection.

Coral Reef National Monument

The zones for Coral Reef National Monument were developed within the framework of the proclamation and interim regulations.

The Marine Reserve Zone: In this zone, the primary focus is resource protection and recovery. Visitor use includes boating, diving and fishing in accordance with the proclamation. Moorings are available for diving or fishing.

Preliminary Alternatives for Virgin Islands National Park

Four preliminary alternatives were created for Virgin Island National Park areas on St. John and two preliminary alternatives were created for Hassel Island, Red Hook, and Wintberg areas on St. Thomas.

Virgin Islands National Park Alternative A

We are required by the National Environmental Policy Act to include an alternative that is referred to as "No-Action," in which current management policies and procedures would continue into the future. Projects and plans approved but not yet constructed are included. This alternative is used as a way to evaluate the effects of the other alternatives and is also useful in understanding why the National Park Service or the public may believe that changes are necessary.

The concept of Alternative A is to continue current management actions and direction into the future. Under the No Action Alternative there would be no major changes in resources management practices, programs, or facilities beyond regular maintenance and operations.

- The Levels of access, recreation and management needed to protect resources and provide quality experiences would remain at current levels.
 - Anchoring would continue to be allowed at designated locations and existing moorings would be maintained.

The Natural Resource Zone – Day Use: This zone includes hurricane hole and surrounding near shore areas. It contains important marine habitats for species maturation and growth. The types of use includes day-use mooring, emergency storm refuge, and fishing (baitfish and blue runner).

The Natural Resource Zone – Overnight Use: This zone is similar to the Natural Resource Zone - Day Use, however, both overnight and day use of moorings is appropriate.



- There would be no changes to the existing fishing policies.

- The Numbers and types of facilities/infrastructure would be maintained; there would be no new trails, roads, or road closings.
- Current levels of partnering, education and outreach efforts would be maintained.



Virgin Islands National Park Alternative B

The concept of Alternative B is to increase the variety of experiences, and provide for greater access while maintaining features that are similar to Alternative A.

The levels of access, recreation and management needed to protect resources and provide quality experiences would be addressed by the following measures:

- Maintain anchoring in existing locations.
- Increase access over Alternative A by installation of approximately 10 to 15 moorings.
- Improve quality and variety of park experiences through formalized transportation partnering, coordination and partnering with local fishers, and formalized education / outreach programs.

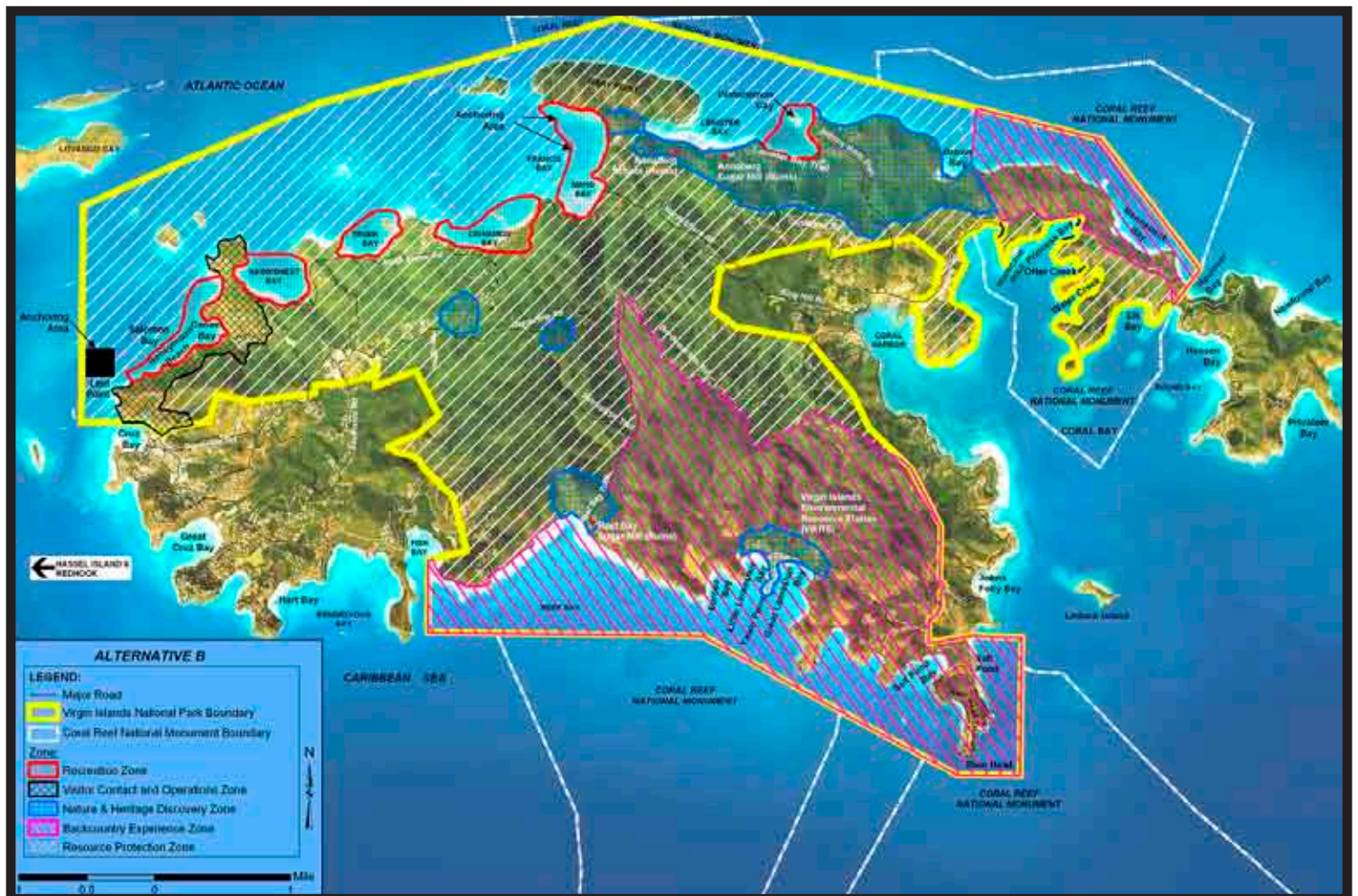


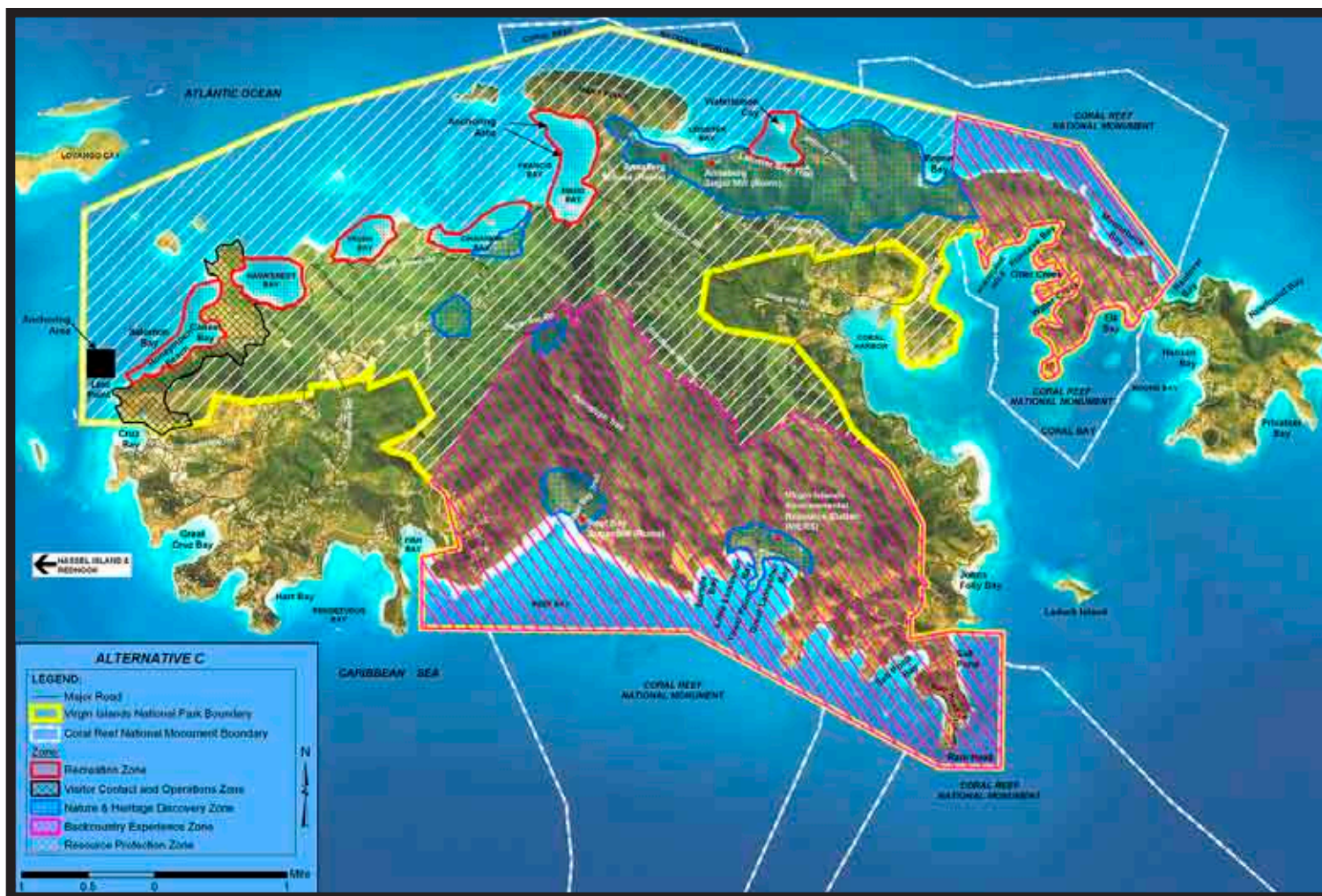
The numbers and types of facilities/infrastructure would change to:

- Allow for greater construction of new facilities than in Alternative A, including designated backcountry camping sites, new trails, roads and facilities.
- Provide an opportunity for limited new parking, an increase compared to Alternative A.
- Provide the opportunity to implement a system of taxis and busses to address overflow concerns at parking areas.

The level of partnering / outreach / education under Alternative B would increase by developing:

- Formalized partnering (especially with fishers and transportation providers), and diversified education and outreach programs. A Communications Plan would be developed and implemented to engage the local community in park projects.



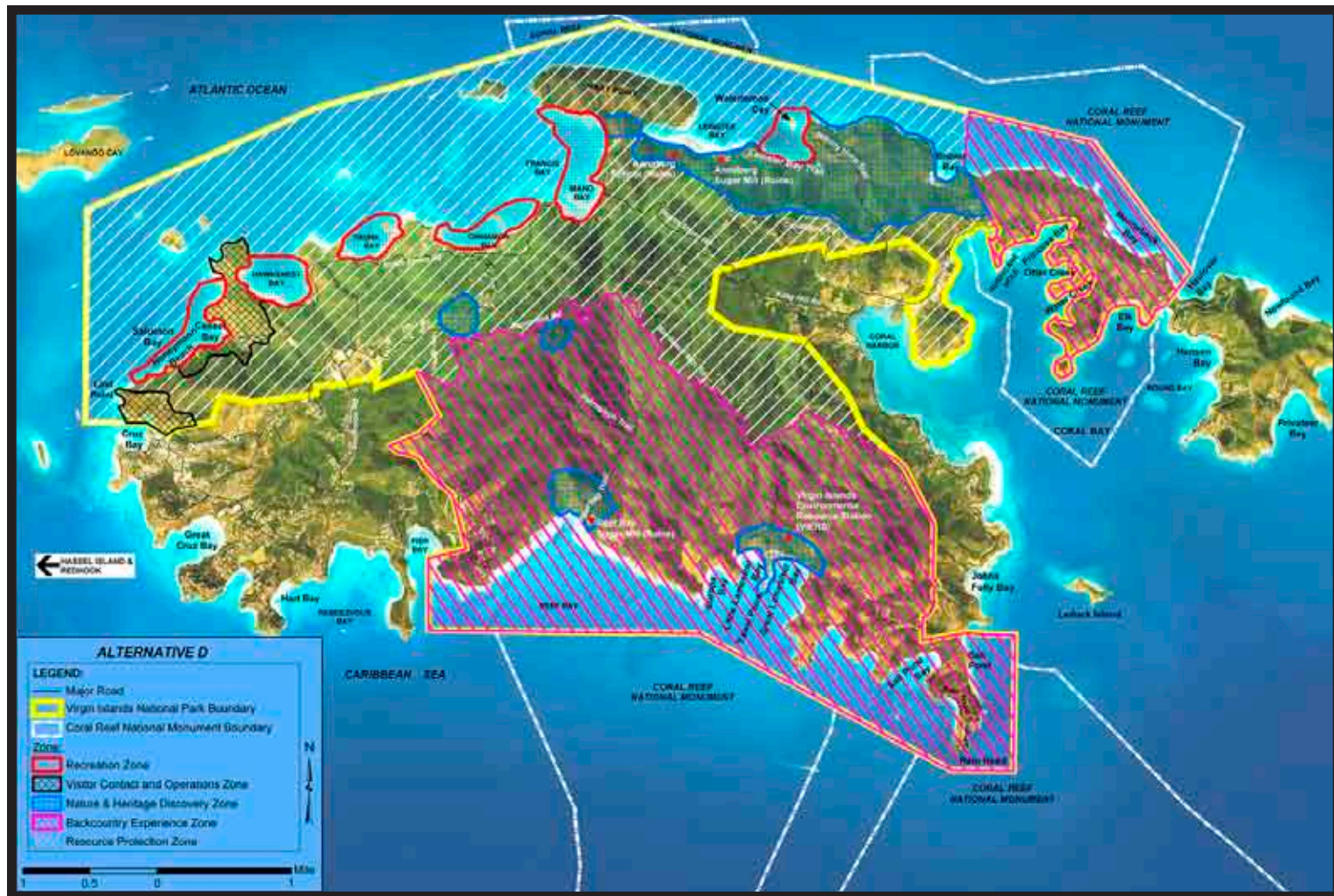


The concept of Alternative C is to provide less variety of visitor experiences and access than Alternative B. The alternative is summarized in terms of the three key concerns:

- Anchoring would be limited along North Shore and continue to be appropriate in designated areas at Lind Pt. and Francis Bay (except for emergencies).
- Boater access would increase over Alternative A by installation of approximately 15 to 19 moorings.
- Beach recreational uses and fishing policies would be similar to Alternatives A and B.

- There would be an opportunity for backcountry camping at designated sites compared to Alternatives A or B.
- Limited new parking would be appropriate, similar to Alternative B.
- There would be the opportunity to implement a system of taxis and busses to address overflow concerns at parking areas.

- Increase compared to Alternative A, but be less than Alternative B. A Communications Plan would be developed and implemented, however, there would be no formal programming.



Virgin Islands National Park Alternative D

The concept of Alternative D is to reduce access compared to other alternatives, and place more emphasis on experiencing the natural environment.

The levels of access, recreation and management needed to protect resources and provide quality experiences would be addressed by the following measures:

- Eliminating anchoring throughout the park (except for emergencies).
- Installing approximately 19 to 23 additional moorings.
- Providing a larger Backcountry Experience Zone compared to other alternatives.

The numbers and types of facilities/infrastructure that would be appropriate include the following:

- Reduced opportunity for new trails, roads, and construction of other new facilities compared to Alternative C, due to the larger Backcountry Experience Zone.

- Increased opportunities for backcountry camping at designated sites compared to Alternatives A, B, or C.
- Limited addition of parking, similar to Alternatives B and C.
- There would be an opportunity to implement a system of taxis and busses to address overflow concerns at parking areas, similar to Alternatives B and C.

The level of partnering/outreach/education would be expanded, similar to Alternative C.

Hassel Island

Alternative A - No Action

The concept of Alternative A is to continue present management practices into the future.

- Existing types of experiences, with limited access, limited trail maintenance and use would continue.

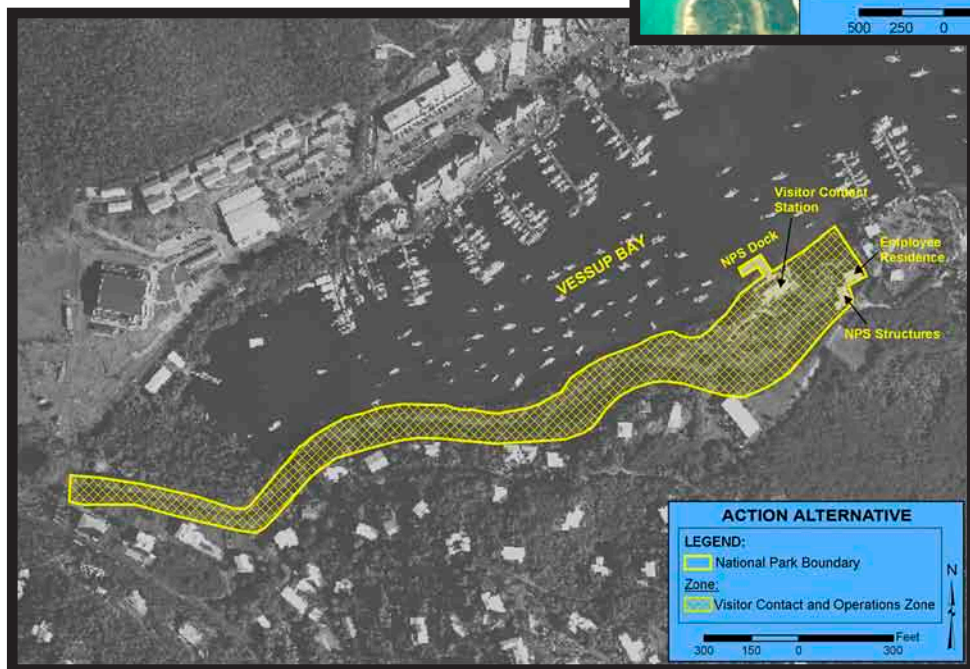
- Minimal ranger presence would be expected to continue.
- No new facilities would be developed.
- The existing level of partnering / outreach / education would be maintained.

Hassel Island Action Alternative

The concept of the Action Alternative is to allow for additional recreational opportunities and increase the level of outreach, education and partnering.

The Action Alternative allows for an increased potential for recreation use and protection of resources. The types of use would include camping in the recreation zone, trail use, and potential increase in the level of education and outreach activities.

The Action Alternative allows for potential improvements, trail maintenance and use, camping and recreational use and increased learning potential. No new roads would be planned or developed.



Coral Reef National Monument

Three preliminary alternatives were created for Coral Reef National Monument.

Coral Reef National Monument – Alternative A

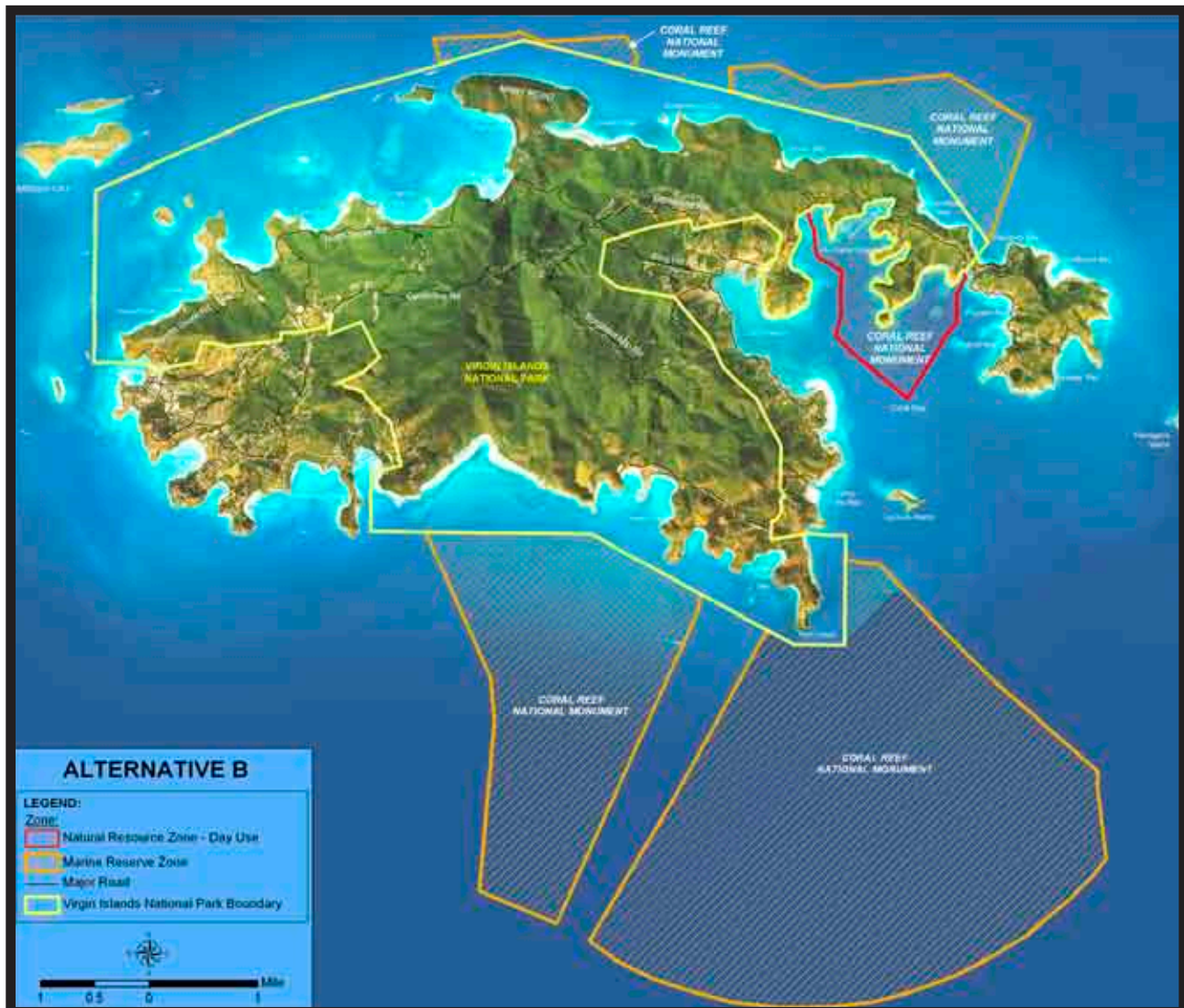
The present levels of resource protection and use would continue under Alternative A. The features of the No Action alternative include the following:

- No anchoring except for emergency / administration purposes.
- No zones.
- Day use moorings.
- Provide limited educational outreach and interpretation.
- Bait fishing at Hurricane Hole and fishing for blue runner south of St. John (by permit).

Coral Reef National Monument – Alternative B

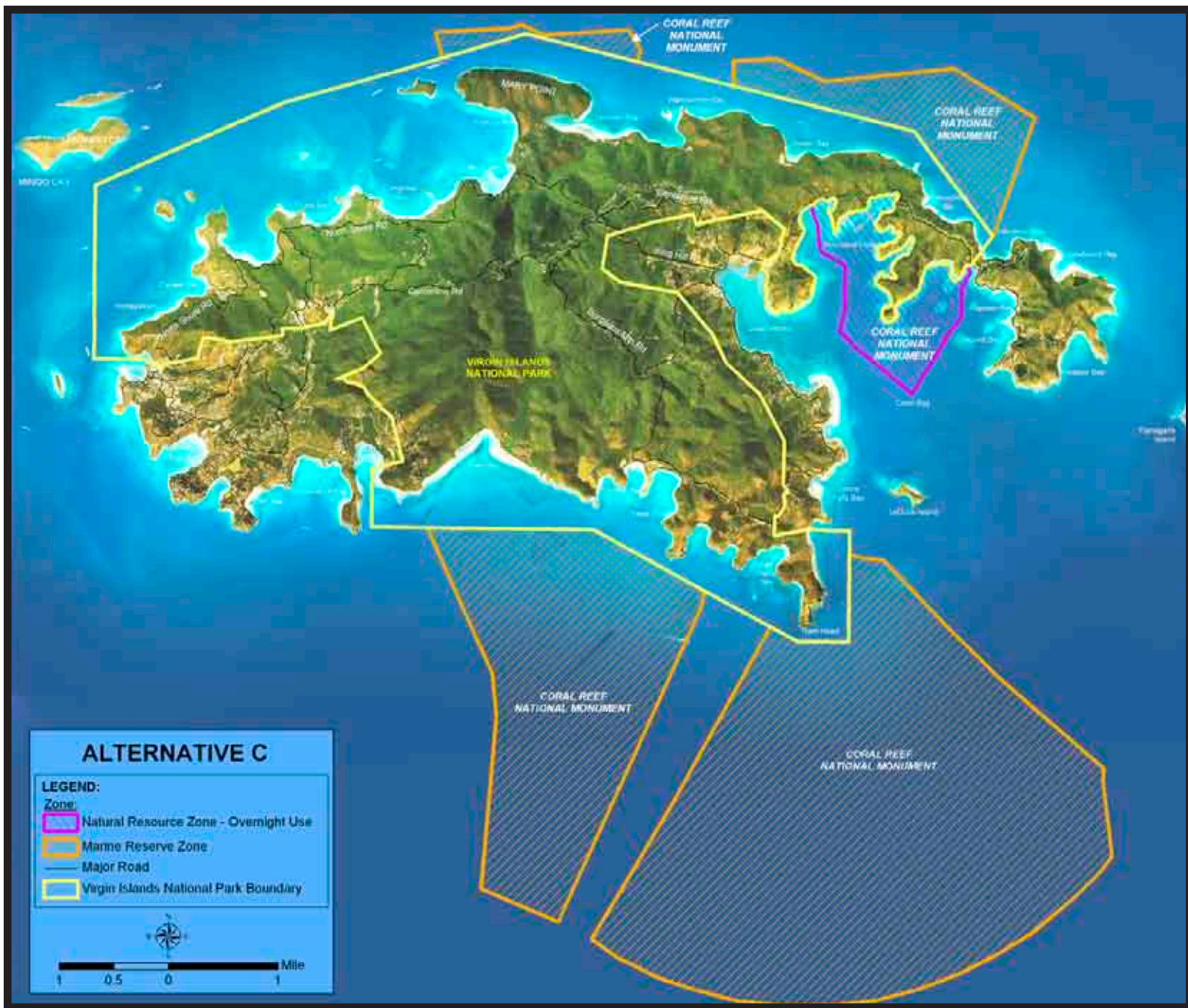
Resource protection would be expanded through boundary identification and increased outreach. The features of Alternative B include the following:

- Boundary markers would be installed.
- Information for boaters and fishers would increase.
- Fishing for baitfish and blue runner would continue.
- Day use of Hurricane Hole as well as for storm refuge (Natural Resource Zone - Day Use) would continue.



Coral Reef National Monument Alternative C

Alternative C is essentially the same as Alternative B except for the establishment of overnight mooring use in the Natural Resource Zone.



Summary of Management Prescriptions for Virgin Islands National Park

Category	Visitor Contact and Operations Zone	Recreation Zone	Nature and Heritage Discovery Zone	Resource Protection Zone	Backcountry Experience Zone
TYPES OF ACTIVITIES					
Day hiking	•	•	•	•	•
Biking	•		•	•	Unpaved Roads or Designated Areas
Kitesurfing (non-commercial) outside mooring area	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	•	•
Picnicking	•	•	•	•	•
Nature observation	•	•	•	•	•
Fishing in Accordance with Regulations		•	•	•	•
Scientific Research	•	•	•	•	•
Boating, Kayaking, Wind Surfing, Surfing	•	•	Not Applicable	•	•
Sunbathing	•	•	•	•	•
Swimming	•	•	•	•	•
Snorkeling	•	•	•	•	•
Scuba Diving / SNUBA	•	•	Not Applicable	•	•
Camping	•	•		In Designated Areas	
Backcountry Camping (by permit)				In Designated Areas	In Designated Areas
Cultural Resource Observation	•	•	•	•	•
Interpretive Walks and Talks	•	•	•	•	•
Overnight Stays on Vessels	•	•			
TYPES OF FACILITIES / DEVELOPMENT					
Trails	Paved and Unpaved	Paved and Unpaved	Paved and Unpaved	Boardwalk and Unpaved	Existing Unpaved
Underwater Trail		•			
Visitor and Administrative Facilities	•	•	•		
Parking areas	•	•	•	•	Existing Unpaved
Picnic areas	•	•	•		
Moorings		•	Not Applicable	•	•
Comfort Stations	•	•	•	•	•
Maintenance Facilities	•				
Limited Maintenance/Ranger Support Facilities			•	•	
Roads	•		Existing or Improve Existing Only	Existing or Improve Existing Only	No New Paved
Playground	•				
NPS Housing	•	Existing Only	Existing Only	Existing Only	
Concessionaire Facilities	•	•	•		
Seaplane Launch/Landing Area					
Boat Launch / Day Use Trailer Parking	•	•			
Marine Facility	•	•			
Pump-out Facility	•	•			
Signage	•	•	•	•	•
Ranger Station	•	•			
Museum / Env. Heritage Center	•	•	•		
Visitor Contact Station	•	•	•		
Campground, Lodge	•	•			
Backcountry Camp Site				•	•
Kiosks	•	•	•	•	•

• Indicates activity or facility is appropriate in zone identified.

**A similar table for Coral Reef National Monument is available on-line (<http://parkplanning.nps.gov>) or from the park.



United States Department of the Interior



NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Virgin Islands National Park
Coral Reef National Monument
1300 Cruz Bay Creek
St. John, VI 00830
(340) 776-6201

http://www.nps.gov/sero/planning/viis_gmp/viis_info.htm

COMMENT FORM General Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement

Please provide us with feedback on the preliminary alternatives for Virgin Islands National Park and Coral Reef National Monument. If you need more space, feel free to attach additional pages to this form. If you prefer, you may comment via the Internet by directing your web browser to the following URL address: <http://parkplanning.nps.gov>. Under the "Choose a Park" drop-down window, find Virgin Islands National Park or Coral Reef National Monument and then click "Go". The National Park Service will not consider anonymous comments.

1. Do you think the range of alternatives for managing Virgin Islands National Park and Coral Reef National Monument is appropriate? If not, what is missing or inappropriate? Please specify which park your comments are applicable.

2. Which alternative do you prefer for managing Virgin Islands National Park and Coral Reef National Monument and why?
If you don't like any of the alternatives, please describe your preferred alternative. (Your comments will help the planning team develop a preferred alternative.)

3. What else would you like the planning team to know as it develops the general management plan?

Your Name:

Organization:

Address:

City/State or Territory/Zip:

Date:

Add me to the mailing list. ☐

Please submit the completed form
by **June 5, 2006** to the address above.
